

Mr. Speaker, the *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act* that passed in 2010 is the law of the land. It extends historic protections to millions of Americans, ensuring access to quality health care. I voted for this law and I am grateful for the support I received from my constituents in Minnesota's Fourth District for my work on reforming our nation's broken health care system.

Access to quality health care is essential for all Americans. I firmly believe health care should be a right for our citizens, not a privilege or a luxury only for the most fortunate who can afford it. I am committed to working to ensure all Americans have the health protections they need and access to the quality health care they deserve. The health reform law we have in place does this.

Today the U.S. House is debating the repeal of the *Affordable Care Act*. The Republican-Tea Party majority officially titled the bill before us, H.R. 2, the "*Repealing the Job-Killing Health Care Law Act*."

They use the word "killing" five times in a bill that isn't even two pages long. Not only is the bill's title offensive and disrespectful, it is untrue. The fact is the health reform law does not kill jobs, its patient protections save lives and create jobs. More than 200,000 health care related jobs have been created since the law passed in March of last year.

This Tea Party Republican bill strips away patient protections for children, seniors, and adults with pre-existing medical conditions. It replaces tough legal protections for patients with a uniquely Republican solution - nothing. Republicans strip away protections for millions of Americans, add \$230 billion to the federal budget deficit according to the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office, and restore a broken health care system which empowers insurance companies, not patients.

I want Minnesotans to know exactly what repealing the existing health reform law would do. If this Republican bill were to become law it would mean:

- Stripping 32 millions of Americans of health insurance and new consumer protections;
- Allowing insurers to deny coverage to children with pre-existing conditions, apply restrictive lifetime coverage limits, impose cost sharing on preventative care, and retroactively cancel a policy when an individual gets sick;
- Eliminating tax credits for as many as 99,000 Minnesota small businesses providing their employees health insurance;
- Refusing 11,400 young adults in Minnesota the option to remain on their parents' health insurance until they turn 26;
- Maintaining a perverse payment system that rewards providers for the volume of services delivered, rather than the quality of those services;
- Jeopardizing the early retiree health coverage provided by 210 Minnesota employers and unions currently receiving financial assistance through the 'The Early Retiree Reinsurance Program'; and
- Risking the Medicare benefits and prescription drug coverage seniors and people with

disabilities depend on to meet their health needs.

H.R. 2 is more than political posturing. It is legislation that sends a clear message to the American people: Republicans care more about protecting insurance company profits than protecting the rights of patients. I will oppose this bill and I will oppose and battle against every effort made in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress to defund, sidetrack, or stall the full implementation of the *Affordable Care Act*.

I am not alone in opposing H.R. 2. Hundreds of national organizations and dozens of Minnesota groups oppose this blatantly partisan effort to repeal health reform. Here are a few excerpts from letters I received over the past few days.

*The Minnesota Medical Association: "the MMA opposes efforts to repeal the ACA (Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act) and urges you to vote against it."*

*Catholic Hospital Association of Minnesota: "I strongly urge you to maintain support for efforts to improve and strengthen our nation's health care system by opposing the legislation before the House to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA)."*

*Epilepsy Foundation of Minnesota: "We strongly encourage you to vote against repeal of the ACA and work toward ensuring that implementation includes the needs of people with epilepsy and other chronic health conditions."*

*Minnesota Hospital Association: "On behalf of the 148 hospital and 17 health system members of the Minnesota Hospital Association, I am writing to express our opposition to legislation that would repeal the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA)."*

Today, as the debate on this ill conceived and mean-spirited bill is taking place, I received the following message from a consortium of small business leaders from across the country:

*The House of Representative's introduction of a bill to repeal the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act is an affront to our nation's small business community.*

*The country's 28 million small businesses stand to benefit greatly from many provisions of the new healthcare law, particularly the tax credits and health insurance exchanges. These two provisions will help drive down costs and offer small business owners more choices when purchasing insurance. These critical provisions and many others would be abolished if the Affordable Care Act is repealed.*

*This would be a huge setback to entrepreneurs who need solutions to the broken healthcare system, not a continuation of it. America's 22 million self-employed would also suffer, as a repeal of the ACA would deny them the opportunity to pool together and purchase insurance at an affordable price through state exchanges.*

It is important to remember that the Republican's dangerous and destructive health repeal agenda can only work if Americans are silent and passive, allowing live-saving rights and protections to be stripped away. Repeal will not happen today, even if this bill is passed, but over the course of the next two years Republicans and their corporate benefactors will use every legal and political channel available to deny citizens their health care rights. They will not stop.

But I will not stop either. I will not stop fighting for the health care rights for all Americans.

I urge all Minnesotans and all Americans to stand up and join me in the fight to protect the historic patient rights all citizens have gained through the *Affordable Care Act* and that starts with a vote against H.R. 2.